[215] 2. Midwifery

One can gain an insight into the intimate problems in this field only after one has acquired the confidence of the older women after a lengthy stay in the country, making a serious broach of the question possible. Once one has this confidence, one is probably safe from deliberate lies. However, one should never depend on the information of one person, but always test the reliability of what one has heard on other people in different places, without ever revealing the least bit of information which one has already acquired. In this way with time and patience I was able to acquire information that was plausible and not contradictory about a series of points from the natives. It was impossible for me to make direct observations in this area. I have tried to fill out the gaps by having a trusted person show me personally the techniques which I had learned were used with pregnant women, those giving birth, and those who have just given birth.

a) Pregnancy (!kx̃u·i, !go/m, v.). The Hottentot woman does not usually consider missing a period the first symptom of pregnancy, but rather the discomforts of pregnancy, *//gao·rab, such as loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, etc., assuming that the person concerned otherwise does not suffer from these disturbances. The loss of color in the face during pregnancy they designate with the same word that is used for make-up: /ho/bo. Whether the afore-mentioned custom of painting the face originally had some connection with pregnancy is difficult to decide.

The Hottentot women claim that they can definitely determine pregnancy in the second month by massaging the abdomen and by feeling the changed uterus through the wall of the stomach. As soon as pregnancy is suspected, the greased abdomen is massaged 2 to 3 times a week by two women for 1 to 1 1/2 hours. The massage begins at the middle line between the breasts and works downward. They work sideways along the curve of the ribs with wide spread thumbs, and work back again with all five fingers flat, from the area above the iliac crests to the front wall of the abdomen. They listen very carefully to see if they hear a gurgling in the large intestine. If they have found gas, [216] they are satisfied. They push it down on the left side of the body until it escapes to prevent it going "to the head," because there it would produce fever in the woman. The massage ends with a gentle pressing upwards of the groin on both sides of the middle line between the breasts.

bladder difficulties of pregnant women in this way: During the growth of the embryo there is a greater burden on the bladder and it is not up to this. 843 826

They reckon the time of delivery inexactly. Their count begins with the new moon following the first indications of pregnancy. Each new moon is noted with a notch on one of the poles of the hut. When they have cut nine notches, they prepare for the happy event. For example: a woman notices on January 25th, 1904 at the time of the first quarter of the moon that she is pregnant. On the day of the next new moon (February 16th) she makes the first notch and at the ninth new moon (October 9th) the last one. Now she awaits the child, 246 days after the first signs of pregnancy. The pregnancy calendar of a white woman would estimate the birth at the end of October. 843 805 221

b) Delivery. (//ora·s, giving birth, !na·/es, being born; one also hears the word ˢsu/bu·s, relief, ha/s, getting. oa·s means calving of cows and, when said of a person, is scorned as a vulgar expression). I have seen women immediately before delivery with a staff of midwives in readiness. Once I saw six women squatting around in one hut scarcely 3 meters in width. Mixed in with the smoke of the sooty fire was the smoke of the coffee which they burned and of the pipes which steadily made the rounds. It was difficult to recognize the woman who was the cause of this gathering who lay on the floor in the background covered with skins. I was also able to visit women after they had given birth and find out about the details of the birth. But in spite of many personal connections with several families and their many relatives I was never able to be an eye-witness at a birth. Even when the pregnant woman expressly gave me permission to attend, [218] I would either hear about the event just after it had occurred, or if I had found out about it in time, permission had subsequently been withdrawn. Consideration for the woman in labor, which according to the prevailing opinion of the Hottentots does not even permit the presence of a male Hottentot, forced me to give in. I am therefore particularly indebted to my honored old friend, Frau v. B., who grew up among the Hottentots and has been active for decades in their huts as a midwife. She became very well acquainted with the birth practices of the Little Namaland Hottentots where they are still removed from cultural contacts. I have thoroughly tested the information that she gave me. My research in Great Namaland before and after she gave me this information makes me fully prepared to accept the responsibility for the following even without the personal guarantee of my authority. 844 [578] [124]

3: Hoernlé E-5 (1912-1913) 1918 FX13 Hottentot FX13
Nama

perhaps, one of the largest tribes, is probably the one most satisfactory to study, for these people have been marooned for two or three centuries among the sand dunes which form their present home, attracted thither by the famous !náras melon which provides them with food for many months in the year. I travelled in the country five years after the end of the German-Hottentot wars, during which great numbers of the older people perished, and the whole tribal system of the Hottentots received its death blow.

The Hottentots are now a passing people, who have practically given up the struggle of keeping alive their own traditions. What vitality is left is spent in the absorption of the ways of the incoming Europeans. One has, therefore, to be content with what remnants of their former customs and beliefs one can still gather from them. It was only by reviving long forgotten memories among the oldest of the men and women that I could gather up many of the customs of the past. One of my best informers, a woman, reproached me bitterly for encouraging her to think of things she had spent half her life in trying to forget: "You have made me live the old life once more; soon you will be going, and what shall I do then?"

The four transition rites which I shall describe are, however, practised even now among the people I visited, though sometimes in a simplified form owing to the great poverty which prevails. Though I have obtained details from many informants, the main contribution is that of four persons, two men and two women. It is to one of the women that I am most indebted. Hannah[1] !Amatis was, before she married among the ǂĀunin, a member of the //Khau-ǂGôan tribe, where she learnt all she knew from her grandfather. The latter was headman of his tribe, and as she was his favorite, and a very clever girl, he told her all the old lore of his tribe. She became my closest friend among the Hottentots, and to her I owe the framework of my information. She is now a woman well over 60 years of age. Louisa !Kabes is a somewhat younger woman, less intelligent, but very inquisitive. As a girl she used to hide where old and important people were talking, thinking that such as she were far away. She married into the family of the old Captain Piet //Eibib of Walfish Bay, who was long subsidized by the Cape Government, and who was a most intelligent old man. He died some eight years before I came among the people, well over eighty years of age. Gottlief //Àmib was the oldest of my informers, and both he and his brothers had been throughout their lives, not only because of their family connections, but because of their intelligence, the headmen of the captain of the Topnaars. Gottlief was a splendid informer and an admirable character, but he was becoming frail, and his memory was no longer at its best. He often said he was no use, and wished I might have clearer information on what were for him exceedingly weighty

[1] Most Hottentots have now a "Christian" name as well as a native one.

10: Grevenbroek F-5 (ca. 1694) 1933
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Cape Hottentot

I add no more. I would not be thought indiscreet through writing what ought to be concealed or revealing state secrets. At the request of the commander in charge of the Cape I have put in writing much that it is worth knowing regarding the life, habits, and condition of the natives both far and near. I am glad that this has pleased the Council of the India Company, and still more glad am I to devote all my efforts and thoughts and sleepless nights to the public good, though I be trampled on.

Now farewell, reverend sir, and may you enjoy lasting health. Be indulgent to this little composition which has been thrown together from my note-books and odd pages of writing. It is a rough sketch, embodying matters of hearsay as well as information gathered from reliable witnesses, written records, authentic documents, and my personal observation. My informants must bear the responsibility for what they say. Many statements have been filtered through the dull ears of four or five interpreters, and then poured forth in a bold, rash, and barbarous style by men who believed they understood what was told them, though they really understood nothing. They interpret badly, but endeavour by their boldness to make themselves believed, and they often contradict themselves. Inevitably they all miss the true sense, and our understanding is darkened and we get false notions of the real facts. I hope, nay, I am confident, that this slight sketch of the province, and description of the country will soon be superseded, for the common good, by another of more powerful eloquence fashioned in every line, truly and brilliantly, by the hand of a Lysippus.

I pray God to preserve you long in health and strength for us, and may your love for me not grow cold, for you know that I would give myself, my fortune, and my life for your wellbeing.

[p. 300 is blank]

11: Maingard Q-5 (1931-1932) 1932
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Korana

them, they divided. One part of their nation went in the direction of Cape Town and settled there; another part went down the Orange River, and the Korana, the greatest and richest tribe, remained."[16] 173

This is very important testimony, because Rev. Wuras had lived among the Korana of the "Right Hand" tribe at Bethany for twenty-two years (1836-58). He had been the chief missionary at that Berlin Missionary Station. He had lived in close sympathy with them and had earned their confidence, not only by speaking their own Korana language fluently, but by many acts of kindness and of help in the defence of their land. He was in a better position than any man to obtain the correct information. His informant—unfortunately nameless—had been born about 1758, that is, if there had been a great "trek" from the Cape in the early 18th century, the memory of it would still have been alive among the generation preceding him and there might conceivably have been some of the original trekkers still surviving in his early boyhood to tell him the tale. At any rate, his testimony dates as far back as that of Massow Rijt Taaibosch.

In the welter of confusion that springs from all these traditions,—confusion of dates, confusion of geographical routes, confusion of personalities involved,—it was very difficult to come to any definite conclusion, and I thought that, by appealing to yet another Korana tribe, the "Links" or "Left Hand" tribe, I could clear up all these doubts and difficulties. Therefore, with anxious anticipation, I questioned the oldest among them, not with leading questions, for I would have had my answer that they came from Cape Town, but carefully and picking my way through all their falterings and lapses of memory, I questioned again and again. But in vain, for *Matiti*, *Teteb*, *Tabab*, all gave the same answer, that they came "from the quarter of the rising sun and then from the quarter of the setting sun, always along the sea-shore, until they reached the Great River which they followed up." 124 173

Indeed, we may sympathise with Peter Kolb, the good schoolmaster of Aysch, when, in his third letter of the second part of his *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*, etc., sorely pressing his memory as to where the *Chorachoquas* had gone,[17] he laments over the loss of his manuscripts. Had we possessed this information, our difficulty,—the exact location of the Korana in beginning of the 18th century—might have been solved. 127

[16] *Bantu Studies*, Vol. iii. p. 290.
[17] Op. cit. p. 391. col. a [1st. German edition—1719.]